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ABSTRACT

A number of issues in the reading curriculum need studying, analyzing, and synthesizing. Among them is the emphasis on definite scope and sequence in phonics versus individualized reading. A second issue in the teaching of reading involves the use of precise, measurably stated objectives versus flexible, general goals. A related issue involves having a logically or psychologically developed reading curriculum. A third issue pertains to motivating students through extrinsic versus intrinsic means. This addresses the question of the conditions under which energy levels will be at their optimum for learning to read. Other issues to consider might include: (1) how much emphasis should be placed upon the use of structural analysis, context clues, syllabication, configuration clues, and picture clues by learners in identifying new words; (2) how much direct instruction should be given to develop depth in comprehension skills; and (3) how student purpose in reading might be encouraged without undue emphasis being placed upon the concept of analysis. (HOD)

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ISSUES IN THE READING CURRICULUM

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ISSUES IN THE READING CURRICULUM

There are selected issues in the reading curriculum which need studying, analyzing, and synthesizing. Reading is generally considered as the first of the 3 R's (reading, writing, and arithmetic). Reading permeates all curriculum areas which include social studies, science, mathematics, art, physical education, and music. Thus, skills developed in reading are applicable to secure subject matter knowledge, solve problems, and develop well personally and socially.

Controversy in the Issues Domain

Which issues are vital to consider in reading? There are selected reading specialists advocating heavy emphasis be placed upon phonics instruction. Thus, teaching suggestions contained in the manual section of an adopted reputable basal reader may be followed by the teacher in providing scope and sequence in the phonics curriculum. There are selected basal readers placing high priority on phonics teaching. Also, related workbooks containing sequential phonics learnings might also be used. It might also be possible to measure if any one learner was correct/incorrect in responding to sequential items involving phonics. In each incorrect response, the teacher needs to provide feedback so that the involved learner might then respond correctly. Hopefully, pupils individually will utilize acquired learnings to unlock unknown words using appropriate sounds (phonemes) with the accompanying symbols (graphemes).

Toward the other end of the continuum, selected specialists advocate the utilization of individualized reading. Within flexible frameworks, the learner personally selects sequential library books to read. The pupil is the chooser, not the teacher. The teacher suggests books if a pupil is unable to locate a suitable title. There needs to be an ample supply of library books with diverse titles and reading levels from which selections are made. The interests and purposes of the learner, not the teacher, provide criteria in making the selections.

The pupil reads the book silently after which a conference with the teacher is held to appraise progress. The conference needs to stimulate, not hinder pupil interests and purposes in reading. The teacher might ask interesting questions of the learner pertaining to what was read in the library book. Comprehension of content and interest in reading endeavors must be noted by the teacher in the conference. The learner may choose a selection to read orally to the teacher. Thus, it may be noticed which words, if any, a child fails to identify. Guidance may be provided by the teacher in assisting the learner to overcome reading deficiencies.

Additional means used to appraise learner comprehension in individualized reading might include:

1. the pupil developing a related diorama, mural, or pencil sketch to reveal comprehension.

2. the involved reader writing a play, developing a pantomime, or creative dramatics presentation pertaining to content in the library book.

As is indicated in describing an individualized reading program, little emphasis is placed upon scope and sequence in phonics instruction. Advocates of individualized reading believe that pupils hurdle many problems in word recognition, phonics included, if interest is inherent in the selection being read. Thus, pupils individually choose a library book based on personal interests. With intrinsic interest involved in reading, the pupil might then conquer diverse problems in identifying unknown words, as well as difficulties in comprehension.

A second issue in the teaching of reading may involve the use of precise, measurably stated objectives versus flexible, general goals. Behaviorism, as a psychology of learning, advocates using specific objectives in the teaching of reading. The teacher then first determines measurable objectives, sequentially arranged, for pupils to attain. The ends are arranged in ascending order of complexity. The teacher then needs to select learning activities to guide pupils in goal attainment. After teaching pupils in order that a specific objective be attained, the teacher may measure if learners individually were successful in

achievement.

Behaviorists advocate a relatively structured reading curriculum. Thus, teachers predetermining ends, activities, and appraisal procedures is recommended in teaching pupils. A logical curriculum is then in evidence. The teacher logically ascertains sequence for pupils.

Toward the other end of the reading continuum, is a psychological curriculum in which pupils with teacher guidance are involved in determining sequence. General objectives may harmonize better with considerable input from learners in determining the reading curriculum, as compared to the utilization of measurable ends. With pupils, for example, choosing the learning center, as well as the task to participate in, pupils are sequencing their own reading experiences. Thus, learners are achieving on an individual basis separate objectives from other learners in the class setting. Not all pupils then are attaining the same objectives, such as in the utilization of measurable ends. Rather, goals pursued by learners are open-ended and thus harmonize better with general objectives.

A vital issue then pertains to how precise or how general should objectives be written for pupil achievement. A related issue involves having a logically or psychologically developed reading curriculum.

A third issue pertains to motivating learners through extrinsic versus intrinsic means. Under which conditions then will energy levels be at their optimum in learning to read in an optimal manner? Behaviorists are advocates of using extrinsic motivation to encourage pupil learning. With measurable results from pupils emphasized in teaching and learning, the teacher may determine how many precise ends need to be achieved by learners prior to the giving of rewards for successful achievement. Primary reinforcers (direct giving of awards) or secondary reinforcers (tokens to be exchanged for prizes) may be given to learners for attaining an agreed upon number of measurable objectives. Prizes may include inexpensive games, candy, fruit, gum, badges, and certificates, among others. Verbal praise for quality learning by pupils is also a suitable means of reinforcing learning.

Toward the other end of the continuum, Jerome Bruner, psychologist from Harvard University, emphasizes learning be its own reward. Thus, intrinsic motivation is in evidence. Educators have frequently noticed feelings of elation among learners when the latter have made discoveries and found out on their own. Thus, in reading a given selection, the excitement of identifying new words correctly, the satisfaction of acquiring needed information, and the appreciation of literature, in general, is its own reward. No prizes or tokens need to be given for success in learning. Within, the learner discovers enthusiasm and motivation for learning.

How might the extrinsic/intrinsic motivation controversy be resolved in stimulating optimal learner progress in reading? Educators need to address the issue in attempting to achieve synthesis in a consistent philosophy of education.

In Conclusion

Broad, general issues have been discussed involving:

(a) definite scope and sequence in phonics versus individualized reading.

(b) measurably stated versus general objectives in the reading curriculum.

(c) extrinsic versus intrinsic motivation in ongoing lessons and units of study.

Additional issues might include:

1. how much emphasis should be placed upon the use of structural analysis, context clues, syllabication, configuration clues, and picture clues by learners in identifying new words. Should a predetermined, comprehensive scope and sequence curriculum be developed by teachers in order that depth learning may occur by pupils pertaining to <u>each</u> of these word recognition techniques?

2. how much direct instruction should be given to develop depth skills in <u>each</u> of the below named comprehension skills? Reading to acquire

(a) facts and details.
(b) main ideas and generalizations.
(c) directions
(d) sequential content.
(d) skill in analyzing
(f) abilities in creative thinking.
(g) skill in skimming and scanning
(h) pleasure and recreation
(i) knowledge useful in problem solving.

Thus, the teacher of reading might spend considerable time in having learners achieve diverse reading comprehension skills, if each of the above receives depth instruction emphasis. To what extent, if any, would pupils lose interest in reading if numerous separate reading comprehension skills are stressed in ongoing lessons and units? Does excessive analysis of skills emphasized in the reading curriculum distract from reading for pleasure and enjoyment?

3. Further levels of analysis in the literature curriculum might occur if learners are guided to develop depth understandings pertaining to

(a) characterization
(b) setting
(c) imagery
(d) plot
(d) theme
(f) vocabulary

How might learner purpose in reading be encouraged without undue emphasis being placed upon the concept of analysis? This certainly is a worthwhile problem for educators to consider and solve. Each pupil needs to achieve optimally in reading.